



# Consumer Alert

## Report Utility Cable Theft!



The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) urges Michigan's citizens to watch for and report utility cable theft.

An alarming increase in the number of copper utility cable thefts in Michigan has become a serious problem – compromising public safety and utility service reliability.

Copper cable theft is a growing problem across the state and across the country due to copper's increased value. Demand is up, due, in part, to a building boom in India, China and other Asian countries. Internationally, the price of copper has risen from a low of 60 cents a pound in 2002 to approximately \$3.50 per pound in 2007. At this increased price, thieves are stealing the copper wiring and reselling it for its scrap value.

### Safety Risks

Stealing telephone and electric service cables is dangerous – for the thieves and for utility customers. Six people in southeast Michigan were killed in 2006 either from falls or electrocution in efforts to steal copper. A compromised electric system can expose live or ungrounded wires – presenting the danger of electrocution or fire. Electric company substations, a target of copper thieves, carry high voltage, and, when vandalized, pose a major safety hazard to utility employees, passersby and those living near the substation.

### Service Outages

Copper cable thefts can cause electric and telephone service outages for entire neighborhoods – inconveniencing hundreds and even thousands of customers. Power outages can knock out traffic signals – posing a serious traffic safety threat. And, in the event of an emergency, affected telephone customers are not able to call 9-1-1 for assistance.

### Contact Law Enforcement

If you see suspicious activity around a substation or utility lines, report it to the police. Your action could protect the reliability of your utility service and you may even be responsible for saving a life.

